

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 1829

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, AF

SUBJECT: MESSAGE FOR SECRETARY FROM BHUTTO

1. AT AIRPORT CEREMONY YESTERDAY IN CONNECTION WITH ARRIVAL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNOR GENERAL KERR, AGHA SHAHI TOLD ME THAT BHUTTO HAD ALREADY GIVEN FAVORABLE RESPONSE DIRECTLY TO THE SECRETARY ON SUBJECT OF HIS RECENT MESSAGE ON SUBJECT OF CESSATION OF PROPAGANDA WHICH INCREASES TENSIONS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN. I HAVE THIS MORNING RECEIVED BHUTTO'S REPLY, WHICH IS REPORTED HEREIN FOR THE BENEFIT OF KABUL AND OTHER ADDRESSEES. BEGIN QUOTE: DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I HAVE RECEIVED THROUGH AMBASSADOR BYROADE YOUR MESSAGE ABOUT CESSATION OF RADIO BROADCASTS BY AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS REDUCING TENSIONS AND INITIATING A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS.

WE HAVE EXERCISED CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT IN THE FACE OF GRAVE PROVOCATIONS ON THE PART OF AFGHANISTAN. AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, FOR WEEKS BEFORE THE ASSASSINATION OF MY CLOSE AND TRUSTED COLLUEGE MINISTER SHERPAO, KABUL RADIO WAS BROADCASTING THREATS TO HIS LIFE. TE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT IS THEREFORE IN NO POSITION TO EVADE ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TRAGEDY.

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NEVERTHELESS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT YOUR COUNSEL TO BOTH SIDES TO FIND A WAY TOWARDS A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THEIR DIFFERENCES, AND PROMPTED BY OUR OWN GENUINE DESIRE FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE WITH AFGHANISTAN, WE ARE PREPARED TO CONTROL OUR RADIO BROADCASTS IF AFGHANISTAN DOES THE SAME. I ENTIRELY AGREE WITH YOU THAT A CESSATION OF BROADCASTS WHICH INCREASE TENSIONS IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE CREATION OF AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN US AND AFGHANISTAN. WE ARE PREPARED TO TAKE THIS STEP ON A BASIS OF RECIPROCITY FROM ANY MUTUALLY AGREEABLE DATE. WARMEST PERSONAL REGARDS, ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO, END QUOTE.

2. I HAVE BEEN A BIT CONCERNED ABOUT THIS EXERCISE, DESPITE THE VERY ADMIRABLE AND SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS OF SENATOR PERCY WHICH CULMINATED IN APPARENT AGREEMENT IN NEPAL WHICH CALLED FOR CESSATION OF THESE ACTIVITIES AS OF MARCH 1. MY FIRST CONCERN WAS THAT, BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT WITH BHUTTO, THE PRESIDENT OF PAKISTAN NEVER, REPEAT NEVER, BECOMES INVOLVED OR TAKES RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. MY FIRST REACTION, THEREFORE, WAS THAT BHUTTO MIGHT BE CHAGRINED OVER THE WAY MATTERS PROCEEDED AND THAT MIGHT AFFECT HIS ACTION. IT WOULD APPEAR NOW THAT THIS CONCERN WAS UNFOUNDED.

3. MY SECOND CONCERN WAS BECAUSE OF THE TIME ELEMENT. I DO NOT KNOW IN WHAT DETAIL BHUTTO MAY HAVE BEEN BRIEFED BY RETURNING PRESIDENT WHO WENT STRAIGHT TO LARKANA ON FEBRUARY 26. I DO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT THE OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE RETURNING DELEGATION AS REGARDS THE TALKS IN NEPAL DID NOT REAC SHAHI IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE FOR ITS CONSIDERATION UNTIL VERY LATE AT NIGHT ON FEBRUARY 28. WHEN I SUPPLEMENTED THE CONTENTS OF THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE THE NEXT MORNING WITH REMARK TO SHAHI THAT THE TWO SIDES HAD AGREED IN NEPAL UPON AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF MARCH 1, HE WAS MUCH SURPRISED AND CONCERNED AS IT WAS OF COURSE ALREADY MARCH 1. EFFECTIVE ACTION BY BHUTTO TO GET THE WORD TO ALL THE MANY SOURCES HERE WHO NORMALLY SPEAK FREELY AND PUBLICLY ON MATTERS RELATING TO AFGHANISTAN WOULD OF CONFIDENTIAL

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COURSE TAKE SOME TIME IN ITSELF. I WOULD ASSUME THAT BHUTTO RECEIVED THE WORD ABOUT MARCH 1 FROM SHAHI, IF IN FACT HE DID NOT GET IT FROM THE PRESIDENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE LAST SENTENCE OF BHUTTO'S REPLY WHICH MENTIONS "ANY MUTUALLY AGREEABLE DATE" WOULD SEEM TO LEAVE THINGS UP IN THE AIR FROM THIS SIDE AS FAR AS AGREEMENT ON A DATE IS CONCERNED BETWEEN US AND THE TWO PARTIES INVOLVED. IN RETROSPECT IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN BETTER TO SET A

DATE WHICH WOULD HAVE GIVEN BOTH SIDES, SAY PERHAPS A WEEK, TO GET OUT THE WORD AND GET THEIR HOUSES IN ORDER, ALTHOUGH GIVEN THE DIFFERENCES IN THE NATURE OF THEIR SOCIETIES, I SUPPOSE IT WOULD TAKE LONGER HERE THAN IN AFGHANISTAN.

4. I WILL BE SEEING BHUTTO AS SOON AS FEASIBLE AFTER DEPARTURE OF THE CURRENT STATE VISITOR. IN THE MEANTIME WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION OF RESPONSE OF DAOUD TO THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE. DEPENDING UPON THAT RESPONSE, WE MAY HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE AS TO WHETHER TO WORK TOWARDS A NEW MUTUALLY AGREEABLE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PERCY INITIATIVE . THE GOAL I WOULD THINK, IF ACHIEVABLE, WOULD BE FOR BOTH SIDES TO ARRIVE AT A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE DATE THROUGH THEIR OWN CHANNELS WHILE BEING PREPARED, IF NECESSARY, TO DO MORE THAN THIS IN ORDER NOT TO SEE THIS INITIATIVE FAIL.
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